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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV KCRM TD

SUBJECT: T&T ISLAMIC EXTREMIST CLAIMS SECRET DEAL WITH RULING PARY

Ref: Port of Spain 00318

¶1. Yasin Abu Bakr, the jailed leader of the Jamaat Al Muslimeen (JAM), an extremist Islamic group, recently filed an affidavit as part of his defense case for the February 6 government filing that identified JAM lands to be confiscated to satisfy Bakr's debt to the State (Reftel). The Government's February 6 case seeks to recover millions of dollars for damage caused by the JAM, during its failed 1990 coup attempt (Bakr has been jailed on separate charges of murder, conspiracy, and sedition). In the filing, Bakr reveals the details of a "secret deal" with the now ruling People's National Movement (PNM). According to the affidavit, in 2001, then Leader of the Opposition Patrick Manning and Abu Bakr reached a deal that would forgive JAM debt in exchange for the group providing muscle at election time. Bakr's deposition indicated the defense will argue that the JAM upheld its end of the bargain and that its debt to the state has been fulfilled.

¶2. The quid pro quo is as follows:

The PNM, upon gaining power, would:

¶A. Give the JAM the title to the eight acres of land surrounding its headquarters, the Mucurapo Islamic College, and extend the terms of the educational concordat of the JAM. [Notes: The Concordat defines the terms under which religious denominations are allowed to operate schools & receive state funds;]

¶B. Forgive the entire state debt arising from damages incurred during the 1990 coup and make good on state monies owed JAM'

¶C. Move to recognize the JAM as a legitimate community organization entitled to fair and equitable treatment rather than treat it as an extremist group.

The JAM would:

¶A. Mobilize the "ghetto" (consisting largely of young, unemployed Afro-Trinis) to come out and vote for the PNM;

¶B. Bakr would use his influence to curb violence in "certain hotspots," but credit the reduction in crime to the PNM;

¶C. The JAM would spend approximately TTD1.2 million to win swing votes, and endorse all PNM candidates;

¶3. The UNC has demanded the Prime Minister explain the affidavit filed by Bakr, but no statement has yet been made.

¶4. COMMENT: While it has been somewhat of an open secret that the PNM and JAM reached some sort of agreement for the 2001 elections, this is the first

time that the "secret deal" has been spelled out in significant detail in a public forum. While there are persistent rumors that the opposition United National Congress (UNC) has also engaged in some electoral funny business, this most recent revelation is a boon to their struggling campaign that alleges the PNM continues to be in bed with the criminals. It remains to be seen how these details will influence voting once elections are called. END COMMENT.

AUSTIN